

### **REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE**

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The problem addressed by the instant method is to provide a dividing wall column which has lower operating costs and gives better separation performance than previously known dividing wall columns, particularly at low operating pressures of from about 0.5 to 20 mbar. See page 3, lines 29-32 of the specification.

This problem is solved according to the invention by providing a dividing wall column wherein a dividing wall is located vertically between segments b) and d) and between segments c) and e), the segments b), d), c) and e) have separation- active internals and the cross-sectional area  $A_b$  of the segment b) is at least 10% smaller than the cross-sectional area  $A_d$  of segment d), and the cross-sectional area  $A_c$  of the segment c) is at least 10% greater than the cross-sectional area  $A_e$  of segment e).  
See page 4, lines 1-23.

No such combination of elements is disclosed or suggested by the references of record, on file.

Thus, the subject matter of claims 1-14 is neither disclosed by the prior art nor is obvious. The claims are deemed allowable over the prior of record.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Virginia Manoharan whose telephone number is 571-272-1450.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Glenn Caldarola, can be reached on 571-272-1444.

The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/Virginia Manoharan/

Primary Examiner, Art Unit 1771